

Ecclesia & Grace

There are two ways to begin this session. If the cell group would like, you can go through the imaginative prayer exercise. The other option is to do a meditation on the labyrinth by tracing the finger on the labyrinth. It is more effective to do a walking meditation because we can physically experience the sensation of turning as one walks through the labyrinth, but we don't often don't have the space or the equipment to do that)

Imaginative Prayer Exercise

In this moment – I would like to invite you to take part in this short meditation / prayer exercise. I will be inviting you to do some visualising as I read from John 13. If it helps you, you may close your eyes.

In your imagination, see the room where Jesus is having supper with his disciples. What is the room like – is it large or small? How is it arranged? Are there windows, and if so is there still light coming in at this hour?

Now see the people in the room, yourself among them. Who is there? Is it just the twelve, or a somewhat larger group of Jesus' friends?

Look around at all the people there, and take a moment to listen in on and draw profit from some of the conversations. What are they talking about?

John 13:1-15

Before the feast of Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father. He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end. The devil had already induced Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, to hand him over. So, during supper,

fully aware that the Father had put everything into his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God, he rose from supper and took off his outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist.

At a certain moment, Jesus rises from the meal, removes his outer garments, and ties a towel around his waist. As he begins to wash the disciples' feet, how do they react? What do you feel?

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Master, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well."

Can you see the expression on Simon and Jesus' face during this interaction? How about the other disciples? How do you feel about this interaction?

Jesus said to him, "Whoever has bathed has no need except to have his feet washed, for he is clean all over; so you are clean, but not all." For he knew who would betray him; for this reason, he said, "Not all of you are clean."

Then Jesus moves over to Judas. What is Judas' reaction? Does he say anything to Jesus? How are you feeling as Jesus washes Judas' feet?

Now Jesus comes to you to wash your feet. I want you to imagine Jesus in front of you, and washing your feet. Imagine the warmth of the water flowing over your feet, your toes. Can you hear the soft splashing of water? As Jesus is washing your feet, do you say something to him? Or did you keep quiet? What feelings are coming up for you? Can you feel the texture of the towel as Jesus dries your feet?

So when he had washed their feet and put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, "Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me 'teacher' and 'master,' and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do."

What are you feeling now after Jesus finished washing everyone's feet?

(pause)

Now, slowly bring yourself back into the room, back to the present

Questions

1. How do you feel right now? What was the experience of the imaginative prayer for you like?
2. What do you understand is grace?
3. In what ways have you experienced grace in your life?
4. Do you think you have extended grace to yourself? In what areas have you extended yourself grace? In what areas you have failed to offer yourself grace?
5. What do you think God will say to you about the areas where you failed to offer yourself grace?
6. How do you think you offer grace and yet at the same time hold yourself or someone else accountable?
7. How do you think being able to accept God's grace will transform you?
8. How do you think offering yourself grace will transform you?
9. Is there someone you think you need to offer grace to? Do you find difficulty in doing that? If you do, why do you think that is so?

